

## CIRCULAR

TO THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESS OF MONTREAL.

---

Montreal, 30th November, 1869, forty-seventh Anniversary of the elevation of Mgr. IGNACE BOURGET to the Priesthood.

---

SIR,

My purpose, in addressing to you this Circular, is to speak to you of the reconstruction of the Cathedral, which as you are aware, was destroyed by the great fire of the 8th of July, 1852. You no doubt remember that in 1857, His Lordship the Bishop of Montreal announced to his Diocese his resolution to begin the restoration of the ruins of that building, and that for the accomplishment of so praiseworthy a design, he hesitated not to impose on himself the painful task of going in person round his episcopal city, in order to solicit subscriptions in favor of the work. These subscriptions reached a pretty high figure, and several subscribers then began to pay in whole, or in part, the sums by them subscribed for; but the bad years that followed having determined *Monseigneur* to suspend the work, the payment of subscriptions was not called for; and on several occasions sums tendered were refused, seeing that the execution of the project had been postponed indefinitely. The money actually received was employed for digging the foundations of the Cathedral, and for the purchase of the necessary materials.

I have since repeatedly heard it regretted that *Monseigneur* had no Cathedral, but with this all stopped. However during the Pastoral Retreat in the month of August last, MM. the Parish Priests who were met together for its religious exercises, resolved of their own accord, to open a subscription to enable *Monseigneur* to resume his project; and in order that their subscriptions might be

relied upon, they declared themselves ready to grant their promissory notes for the several amounts by them subscribed for—adding that they would all do their utmost with their several parishioners, to engage them to contribute, according to their means, for so honorable a work. This subscription amounted to about \$30,000; and from the reports which have since reached me, I am convinced that they who were unable to take part in the Retreat will subscribe with equal generosity; indeed several amongst them seem to complain that the priests charged with asking for subscriptions had not, hitherto, applied to them, to associate them in an undertaking worthy of the greatest sacrifices.

A conduct so noble could not be concealed from His Lordship the Bishop of Montreal; therefore I made it my duty, and my pleasure, to make it known to His Lordship who, as I was convinced, could not be but very sensible of this attention on the part of his Clergy to whom he is so warmly attached. The following extract from a letter which he wrote me in reply, under date the 25th September last, shews that in this I was not mistaken :

« *M. l'Administrateur*, the subscription of the Clergy, of which in your last, you inform me, for the rebuilding of the Cathedral, appears to me in the actual circumstances to be really providential. Indeed it would be difficult not to recognise therein the hand of God which declares to us, that it is His will that we set to work to put the crown upon the many works undertaken at Montreal since it has had a Bishop. This last enterprise will be proceeded with during the Jubilee, and during the sitting of the OEcumenical Council, that is to say whilst the hearts of all the faithful, excited by the voice and the example of their pastors, are animated by all those sentiments which faith and piety inspire. It is a favorable moment which we must not loose, for surely in the future no other will present itself, and will offer so many chances of success.

Montreal cannot dispense with a Cathedral Church, and it requires one that shall correspond with its present importance, and its future wants. As you represent me in the affairs of the Diocess, place yourself at the head of this mouvement as if you were indeed myself. »

As you see, *Monseigneur de Montréal* gratefully accepts the aid proffered by his Clergy for the rebuilding of his Cathedral, and looks upon this step as a sign that it is God's will that he should commence the work of its restoration; and to shew how warmly I for my part applaud the act of the Clergy, I cheerfully accept the order given me by His Lordship to put myself at the head of the movement, as if I were indeed himself; for with the powerful help promised by the Clergy whom no doubt the faithful will also strive to rival in generosity, I feel assured of success. And here is my opinion as to the steps to be taken so that all the faithful may with ease contribute towards the execution of the projected work. I say *all* the faithful, for the Cathedral being the Church of all the Diocesans, no matter in what part of the Diocess they may reside, it is but proper that all should contribute towards its construction. It is therefore a *Diocesan* work; it will remain also a monument of the OEcumenical Council of the Vatican, since it is in the year of its opening that the Diocess has taxed itself for the purpose.

It is usual in the rural parishes to make about Christmas time a collection called the collection of the *Infant Jesus*. Well, this is the contribution that I ask for from the faithful of the rural districts whilst we are building the Cathedral, since that contribution appears to me to bear the least heavily on them, seeing that they are accustomed to make it every year, and that the Parochial Clergy will not be obliged to impose a new burden on themselves, since every year they visit each family in their several parishes, whilst the Church-wardens take up the collection.

As to the collection to be made in the City parishes, and those of the *Banlieu*, I will arrange as to time and mode with the MM. the *Curés*, and the members of the Committee formed in 1857 to accompany *Mgr. de Montréal* in his visits throughout the City, and to assist him in the means to be taken for rebuilding the Cathedral: in due time I will have announced these particulars at the *Prônes* of the several churches. In the meantime any offerings that may be sent here will be thankfully received.

As I said above this is a Diocesan work, one in which all should take part poor and rich, young and old alike. In our Colleges therefore, in our Convents, in our Schools and even in private families, the children I feel sure, will make it their pleasure to put aside every year, some few pence from their New Year's gifts, in order to contribute to a work whose necessity and importance they will when older better understand.

And what young man is there who will not be glad to make once a year the sacrifice of some pleasure trip, concert or kindred amusement, to give the cost thereof to the work of rebuilding the Cathedral?

What young girl is there who will not take a pride in stinting herself in some ornaments of her dress, so that she may throw the price thereof into the treasury of so honorable a work?

In the Old Testament, in the Book of Exodus, we see how, at the voice of Moses, the people of God with hearty good will, promptly offered for the construction of the tabernacle the first fruits of their goods. Men and women brought forth their chains, their earrings, their rings and their bracelets; all the vessels of gold were put on one side to be presented to the Lord; with cheerful hearts, men and women made their offerings to complete the work which by Moses, the Lord had ordered. I dare not ask such precious gifts from you; but what I do desire is

that you make those which I ask for with cheerfulness and love, remembering that the Lord loves the cheerful giver.

By these means, means within the reach of all, we shall surely succeed in the execution of a project which at first sight may appear strange, but which we shall be agreeably surprised to see accomplished as if by magic. When a man wills a thing in earnest, he is indeed powerful. I reckon then upon all the members of the Clergy, upon the Superiors and Directors of our Colleges, Convents, Schools, and upon every head of a family, for the realisation of a project so worthy of the faith of a people such as is that of this Diocese.

And in conclusion I have but to express to you a wish which I hope may please you all, and may encourage you to contribute freely to the work which occupies us, especially during the next three years.

It is needless for me to sing the praises of our Venerable Bishop. You all know as well as I know, how blessed we are in having such a Pastor.

We must all pray God to spare him to us for many years to come, to consolidate all the works which he has commenced. It was under the inspiration of this sentiment that some one wrote to him at Rome last summer, to acquaint him with the desire of several priests and laymen that he would allow the rebuilding of the Cathedral to be commenced next Spring, so that, if as it was hoped, he should live long enough to celebrate his fiftieth year of priesthood, he might have a fitting and sufficiently spacious place to celebrate it—in the presence of his Clergy the Religious Communities, and of numbers of his Dioceans. To this His Lordship replied : « It seems to me that my life is strangely calculated upon. But never mind, even though the Cathedral should but suffice for my burial, I willingly agree that the work be commenced. I think that God will bless us, and that we shall succeed.

« I will invoke all the Saints of Rome who dwell in so  
 « magnificent temples that they help us, to find worthy  
 « lodging for our great St. James, and his beloved brother  
 « St. John. »

Now it will be on the 30th November 1872, that *Monseigneur de Montréal* will attain his fiftieth year of priesthood. Of course we do not expect by that time to be able to offer him a Cathedral completed; that would I fear be exacting too much. But by that date let us be content to have the walls, the roof, and the planking. For this we have three summers before us; time will not be wanting—shall we then fail in the means? I should but insult you to suppose so. Let us then set seriously to work, and to console our dear Bishop for his long absence, let us prepare everything so as to let him have the pleasure of blessing the first stone of his Cathedral on his return amongst his dearly loved children; this I am sure will be the best proof of our attachment to his sacred person, and of our gratitude for all that he has done for the temporal and spiritual welfare of his diocesans.

I beg of you to publish from the pulpit of your Church this Circular, and so to comment thereon as to make the faithful understand, both the high importance of the work, and the ease with which it may be accomplished.

I remain very respectfully, Sir,

Your very humble and obedient servant,

A. F. TRUTEAU, Vic.-Gen.,

*Administrator.*

O  
 r  
 r  
 l.  
 l.  
 r  
 g  
 e  
 e  
 e  
 e  
 e  
 e  
 t